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Facultat de Filologia
Grau d'Estudis Anglesos

# Bachelor's thesis

# Supporting FL students' writing through metacognitive writing strategies

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ABSTRACT

This Bachelor's thesis offers a review of the latest empirical research on the practical application of metacognitive and self-regulation strategies at the elementary/secondary and tertiary levels. The analysis synthesizes various metacognitive writing practices that other researchers employed in the FL classroom as well as methods and instruments used to gauge learners' achievements. The overall picture that emerged from the studies reviewed is discussed in terms of the pedagogical implications. Considering these implications, the thesis further offers a 4-hour learning intervention targeted at high-school students in the context of Catalan secondary education. Its main goal aims at developing their metacognitive and self-regulation strategies for pre-writing, composing, and revising a persuasive writing task in the format of a formal letter of complaint. Concluding remarks suggest recommendations for instructors as regards grouping techniques, corrective feedback and rubric use in the didactic proposal.

**Keywords:** metacognition, metacognitive strategy, writing skills, writing instruction

RESUM

Aquest treball ofereix una revisió de les últimes investigacions empíriques sobre l'aplicació d'estratègies metacognitives i d'autoregulació a l'aula de llengua estrangera en els nivells elemental/secundari i universitari. L'anàlisi sintetitza diverses pràctiques d'escriptura metacognitiva que altres investigadors han emprat a l'aula, així com mètodes i instruments utilitzats per avaluar l'aprenentatge dels alumnes. El panorama general que es desprèn dels estudis revisats s'analitza en funció de les implicacions pedagògiques. Tenint en compte aquestes implicacions, la tesi ofereix a més una intervenció d'aprenentatge de 4 hores dirigida a estudiants de Batxillerat dintre del context de l'educació secundària catalana. El seu objectiu principal és desenvolupar les seves estratègies metacognitives i d'autoregulació per prescriure, compondre i revisar una tasca d'escriptura persuasiva en format de carta de queixa formal. Les conclusions finals suggereixen recomanacions per als professors pel que fa a les tècniques d'agrupament, retroalimentació correctiva i ús de rúbriques en la proposta didàctica.

**Paraules clau:** metacognició, estratègia metacognitiva, habilitats d'escriptura, ensenyament d'escriptura

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of this thesis has been inspired by my personal experience of working as an EFL teacher in Spain, namely in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia. As I come from a different academic culture[1], which differed greatly in terms of school organization, legislation, teaching methodologies and facilities, I had to take on board the concerns of the other educational system and adopt teaching approaches different from those I used to be taught with. Needless to say, Catalonia turned out to be a linguistic and cultural laboratory to me, whereas working as a teacher in this new academic context resulted in the reboot of my prior teaching experience. However, my beliefs about writing and classroom writing practices, beyond any doubt, underwent a major reconsideration.

At the beginning of my teaching career, some ten years ago, I would devote much less time to practising writing in the classroom as compared to the other skills. I used to show my students a model text for a certain genre and explain to them its structure, outlining the main ideas of each major part. This explanation was normally followed by a series of exercises focusing on salient vocabulary and grammar. The students further completed their exercises individually and we corrected them as a whole class. Then, I set a task and left the students to write the first draft as a home assignment. After that, they handed in their pieces of writing so that I could provide feedback. Based on my comments, students corrected their papers and submitted their final versions. The time devoted to writing practice within a unit normally spanned three or four sessions. In retrospect, I have to admit this was not the best method of teaching writing. As a rule, my students breathed a sigh of relief at finishing every writing section and their written texts continued displaying recurring mistakes from unit to unit.

Over the following years, whenever possible, I have tended to collect as much information as I could about every new group of students before taking any action. Such an approach has allowed me to get to know not only their levels and preferences, but also problems they experience when learning English. Interestingly, the great majority of my teenage and adult students were determined to improve primarily their speaking skills and such activities as debates and discussions were favourite in the classroom. Meanwhile, the results of their exams and written productions eloquently showed that their writing skills needed considerable improvement. When discussing the assignments, such issues as having no knowledge about the topic, feeling terror when faced with a blank page, organizing thoughts to produce a particular

[1] A post-Soviet school

text type or lacking vocabulary to provide supporting details were reported as the main difficulties in completing their writing activities.

The problems reported by the students evidently go well beyond their lack of vocabulary and knowledge about grammar structures. Rather, they point to the knowledge gap on how to better approach a writing task or, say, what strategies to employ before and while completing a task. Certainly, such basic strategies as brainstorming, mind-mapping or paragraph planning were largely neglected in my classes. As Graham (2019) rightly suggests, "If students are to be successful in school, at work, and in their personal lives, they must learn to write. This requires that they receive adequate practice and instruction in writing, as this complex skill does not develop naturally" (p. 277). Unfortunately, many teachers, and I have to count myself among them in the past, tend to overlook the need for the strategy-writing practice in class and as a result, students often fail to acquire strategic knowledge needed to produce a variety of texts.

Another significant issue was the students' attitude towards the practice of their writing skills. Some utterly despised formal writing, presumably because of the above-mentioned difficulties. The others strongly believed that writing in English was only needed to pass exams and, in real life, long and formal writing was irrelevant, since technology had decreased our dependence on it. While it is true that the technological revolution has changed our information-processing and communication, such skills as taking notes, paraphrasing and summarizing, producing expository and argumentative pieces of writing are still required in different spheres of our life. In fact, we are bombarded with a variety of texts of different formats, which we have to process and respond to, on an everyday basis. Clearly, the importance of practising the writing skill as well as raising students' awareness of the strategies for planning, developing and editing their writing tasks should not be underestimated.

These observations inspired me to explore teachers' use of metacognitive writing strategies in the FL classroom and given this prior experience, to propose a learning intervention aimed at developing metacognitive writing knowledge in high-school students in the context of Catalan Secondary Education. It should be noted that the choice of the context and the grade level of students is not random. A few years ago, I had a chance to implement some didactic initiatives designed to foster 2nd BAT students' writing skills in a Catalonian public school during my practicum, which was a compulsory part of the Master's programme

in Teacher Training that I had enrolled in. At that point, my intention was to analyse the role of reflection on the work done in class in developing students' metacognitive strategy use. The students' preparation for the university entry exams were in full swing and the focus on their writing was relevant more than ever. Despite the exploratory nature of that action research, the findings drawn from the direct observation of the students' performance and their written productions were very positive and showed the relevance of self-reflection tools in the FL classroom. I believe this experience is encouraging in terms of teaching implications and is worth being exploited in my teaching proposal.

### *1.1. Purpose of the study*

This study aims to extend the knowledge of the use of metacognitive writing strategies in the FL classroom, namely:

1. To collect and examine the state of current knowledge in the field of strategy-based writing instruction by reviewing the latest empirical studies on the practical application of metacognitive and self-regulation strategies at the elementary/secondary and tertiary levels.
    1.1. To compare various metacognitive strategy-based writing practices that other researchers employed in the FL classroom.
    1.2. To identify methods that other researchers have used to measure their students' academic achievements.
    1.3. To convey the pedagogical implications of the previous research.
2. To propose a didactic sequence containing metacognitive and self-regulation strategies for pre-writing, composing, and revising a persuasive writing task (a formal letter).

### *1.2. Preliminary concepts*

Before moving on to the overview of the empirical studies, it is essential to define the concepts of metacognition and metacognitive strategies in relation to the writing process.

#### 1.2.1. Metacognition

Writing is a complex and multifaceted skill, which involves not only the ability to use proper spelling, punctuation and grammar to express our ideas on paper, but also metacognitive knowledge to approach a piece of writing itself (Scrivener, 2009). In fact, writing is a thinking process and metacognition is one of its core constituents. Some scholars define metacognition

in terms of the sub-processes we are engaged in when writing, such as planning, organising, editing, and proofreading (McCormic, 2003). Others offer a broader definition, by which metacognition is "knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena," thus placing focus not so much on the sub-processes of writing but rather on its relation to thinking (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). In the context of this thesis, I will be referring to metacognition as "an awareness of and reflections about one's knowledge, experiences, emotions and learning" (Haukås, 2018, p. 13).

Most scholars suggest two key constituents of metacognition, namely *knowledge* and *executive management* (Flavell, 1979; Tobias and Everson, 2000; Haukås, 2018). Metacognitive knowledge, as Jacobs and Paris (1987) further argue, falls into three different domains: declarative, procedural and conditional. When it comes to writing, declarative knowledge embraces learners' beliefs and knowledge about themselves as writers, their strengths and challenges when writing, the topic and task to be managed, motivation and strategies to be used to achieve a goal. Procedural knowledge already covers learners' understanding of how to use general and specific writing strategies, whereas conditional knowledge implies their decision-making on how to effectively approach a task at various stages and what strategies fit best with each stage. Although these three domains of metacognitive knowledge build upon each other, it is not always easy to set clear boundaries between them in the context of language learning (Haukås, 2018, p. 12).

Executive management, in turn, refers to conscious self-regulation of writing through monitoring and controlling (Hacker et.al. 2009; Knospe, 2018). Reading a written text critically, making a piece of writing fit for the intended goal and audience, and reviewing a written product are all about monitoring the writing process. Controlling, on the other hand, resembles process writing which involves the stages of planning, drafting, reviewing and editing (Scrivener, 2009). The stages are by no means linear, but vary in their degree of difficulty and commitment. Apparently, planning and drafting may present a greater challenge to both learners and teachers to cope with. While the former relates to such strategies as establishing the purpose and audience for a piece of writing, barnstorming and organising thoughts, considering a genre and managing the time allocated for a task, the latter deals with selecting relevant ideas and then fitting them into the appropriate text type framework (Knospe,

2018, p. 124). Both seem more cognitively challenging and time consuming as compared to reviewing and editing.

### 1.2.2. Metacognitive writing strategies

The terminology of metacognitive strategies varies greatly, which is largely due to the distinction made by Flavell (1979) and Brown (1987) between cognitive processes and reflective functions monitoring learners' thinking. The working definition for this thesis will be that one offered by O'Malley and Chamot (1990) who conceptualized metacognitive strategies as specific techniques that "involve thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring of comprehension or production while it is taking place, and self-evaluation after the learning activity has been completed" (p. 8). The choice of this particular definition is stipulated by the fact that it perfectly integrates both metacognitive knowledge and self-regulatory behaviour, without drawing any distinction between cognition and metacognition. As already discussed earlier, such a distinction may be difficult to establish, since the same strategy initially functioning as declarative knowledge, which is purely cognitive, may very well turn into procedural knowledge later after extensive practice. As Forbes (2018) rightly points out, "the strategies in themselves are not inherently metacognitive; rather it is the approach learners take to a strategy and their awareness of engaging in that strategy which makes it metacognitive" (p.140).

Indeed, a series of FL intervention studies, based on strategy-based instruction (SBI), suggest that an explicit teacher-led instruction on how to use various strategies raises learners' awareness of metacognition and favours their progress (Chatzipanteli et al. 2014; De Silva & Graham, 2015; Sanmartí & Mas, 2016). For instance, Chatzipanteli et al. (2014) emphasize the potential role of charts and diagrams in brainstorming and mind mapping, which are two strategies that help learners activate prior knowledge of the topic and build the list of vocabulary for a writing task. Graphic organizers in turn provide good support for outlining ideas in paragraphs, which is another strategy that raises learners' awareness of coherence. Sanmartí and Mas (2016) suggest using a rubric not only as a stimulus for self- and peer-assessment of a written product, which proved to be an effective revision and editing strategy, but also as a learning tool. In fact, building a rubric for written production together with learners in class is a highly rewarding activity, since they become aware of such concepts as format, content, audience, and register. What is more, learners become capable of drawing up success

criteria for the task and then checking their own pieces of writing against those benchmarks. Needless to say, these skills are highly important when FL learning is competence-based, as is the case of secondary and tertiary education in Catalonia.

To sum up, this section is aimed at presenting the goals of this study and providing the clear definitions of the concepts, which form the basis for the literature review and my teaching intervention. It is worth mentioning, however, that the strategies discussed at this stage do not determine the types of activities or grouping strategies in my teaching proposal, but rather serve as some illustrative examples of what a metacognitive writing strategy implies.

## 2. REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Metacognition and strategy-based writing instruction are not a new field of research and continue to attract the interest of a growing number of academic professionals from different fields, such as pedagogy, second-language acquisition, cognitive psychology and communication. Extensive studies, which have been conducting since the 1980s, span a variety of research foci: 1) from comparing and describing writing strategies of and between L1 and FL learners to identifying the difference in strategy use by straight-A and weak students (Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1987); 2) from exploring students' knowledge of cognition and their self-regulatory behaviour while writing to investigating the effect of a teacher-led instruction on metacognitive strategy development and the quality of learning (Hartman, 2001; Knospe, 2018; Cer, 2019); 3) from gauging strategy retainment over time in response to writing instruction to assessing strategy transfer to another FL or including L1 (Forbes, 2018). This growing body of scientific work presents a broad range of perspectives on how writing should be taught in general and writing practices in particular.

In this section, I will be reviewing the findings of some recent empirical studies, which were carried out within the context of elementary/secondary and tertiary education from 2015 up to 2020, to trace the practical application of metacognitive writing strategies in the FL classroom and learners' achievements. This critical overview of various methods and results will help me establish key points of agreement between the articles and build a logical argument that will further my teaching proposal.

*2.1. Strategy-based writing practices in the context of elementary/secondary education*

In an attempt to understand the role of reflection in developing Sweden students' metacognitive knowledge in the FL classroom, Knospe (2018) conducted a case study investigating the extent to which a three-month course, encouraging the participants to reflect on their tasks, raised their awareness of metacognition and strategies when writing argumentative texts in German. 7 students at the age of 16 from an upper-secondary school volunteered to participate in the study and as the teaching intervention proceeded, wrote five argumentative texts in individual sessions. Out of these seven students, the scholar randomly chose one, Henry, to present an in-depth analysis of her findings. Henry was a native Swedish speaker, studying English and German as his second and third language, respectively. The German classes were chosen as the FL context for the study.

The teaching intervention spread over three months and involved teacher-led instruction on how to write argumentative texts and a set of activities that engaged the students into activating their prior knowledge, drawing up mind-maps, outlining, using compensation strategies, such as "move on," "simplifying," "online resources," revision and self- and peer-assessment (Knospe, 2018, p. 127). Upon completing each writing task on a computer, Henry was interviewed about his writing experience. The screen-recording files, drawn from the keystroke logging and screen-recording software, served the purpose of stimulating the discussion during the interview. These data were further analysed employing a deductive approach and Henry's metacognition-related statements were assigned initial codes using three major categories: declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge.

A thorough recursive analysis of the content revealed the instances of declarative knowledge, pointing to Henry's knowledge about himself as a writer and his lack of linguistic competence, the task and strategies employed. No traces of executive management, procedural or conditional knowledge were found, though. Affective aspects appeared to be factors influencing both the student's performance and the quality of his written production. It is because of his mistakenly low self-appraisal, Henry avoided using planning strategies in German, heavily relied on online dictionaries and in fear of making mistakes, tended to simplify his writing texts. In order to help learners progress and change this behaviour, as Knospe (2018) points out, "it seems advisable for teachers to give learners space and time to reflect on multiple aspects of learning and to pay closer attention to learners' metacognitive

knowledge, especially regarding their image of themselves as learners and their learning capacities (p. 135).

Another case study comes from Forbes (2018), who explored the extent to which the use of metacognitive strategy in the FL classes had an impact on students' strategy development and the transfer of FL writing strategies to L1. This case, which was part of a larger quasi-experimental study, focuses exclusively on the qualitative findings. For this purpose, the scholar selected 6 students aged 13-14 from a mixed-ability class in a secondary school in England, considering the following variables: gender, academic achievements, linguistic background and attitude towards the language subjects. Most participants were native English speakers, learning German for three years as their second language and French for four or five years as their third language at school. The German lessons were prioritised as the FL context for this case study, though. The participants were asked to perform a set of writing tasks in German and English at three different points: at the very beginning of the school year, after the explicit SBI intervention and at the end of the academic year. The methods used to collect data were teachers' direct observation, stimulated recall interviews with the students immediately after they finished their tasks and their written productions.

At the start of the school year, in order to explore the students' awareness of writing strategies in general, they were to write a narrative about travel in English and an email to a future exchange student in German on a writing task sheet. Upon completing these tasks, the students were interviewed on the work done and their feedback was used to design the SBI intervention, which was further implemented in the German and English lessons during the whole academic year. A series of designed activities actively engaged the students in reflecting on their writing in class and planning and monitoring, namely, setting goals for the task, identifying relevant ideas and considering key language features using a *Structured Planning Sheet*. In addition, a series of self-assessment and peer-assessment activities were designed to help them evaluate their pieces of writing in German.

After four months of SBI in the German classroom, the students were to complete the second set of the writing tasks, a narrative about hobbies in German and a diary entry on a character from a literary text in English, to investigate the effect of the teacher-led instruction in the German classes on their metacognitive strategy development and strategy transfer, if any, to their L1. After that, the SBI intervention continued for four more months in the German

lessons, but it was already reinforced with similar metacognition-oriented activities in the English lessons to make the links between strategy use explicit in two language contexts. At the very end of the year, the students completed the final set of the tasks, an article on how to use computers in German and a piece of creative writing in English. The results drawn from the analysis of the data collected at the last two phases revealed the positive effect of the explicit SBI intervention on the students' strategy use, accuracy and performance level. The average number of uncorrected errors per every 100 words declined from 17 at the start of the school year to 7 at the end. Getting the students engaged metacognitively with their writing tasks contributed not only to their greater involvement into planning and the development of self-assessment skills, but also facilitated cross-linguistic transfer of strategies —FL-L1—as a result of explicit instruction, especially in relation to planning and proofreading.

To identify effective instructional practices in upper-elementary public school in the Netherlands, Koster et al. (2015) carried out a meta-analysis of 59 writing intervention studies. These employed a pre-/post-test design and quantitative statistical analysis of students' performance, text quality and the impact of a teaching intervention. Initial coding of the studies spanned such categories as number of participants, the existence of experimental and control groups, publication type of the paper and the text type of post-test written product. A measure of text quality at post-test was used to calculate the effect size. Furthermore, in order to account for heterogeneity in effect sizes among the selected studies, the following variables were also taken into consideration: random assignment/quasi-experimental design, the length of an intervention and the amount of time spent to teaching writing in class, type of instructor, number of writing tasks and type of assessment. A thorough recursive analysis of the teaching interventions allowed for classifying their writing practices into ten categories: 1) strategy instruction; 2) text structure instruction; 3) pre-writing activities; 4) peer assistance; 5) grammar instruction; 6) feedback; 7) evaluation; 8) process approach; 9) goal setting; and 10) revision.

Out of these, only five writing practices in the following order of priority—goal setting, strategy instruction, text structure instruction, feedback, and peer assistance—appeared to be the most effective, as demonstrated by the average effect size calculations. Interestingly, the effect sizes within the category of strategy instruction showed lower scores for those studies where instructors used task-specific scoring rubrics to evaluate their students' final tasks. On

the other hand, holistic assessment, which involved both grading students' writings based on a set of criteria and formative measures during instruction and learning activities, yielded larger scores. Grammar instruction and the process approach to writing did not show improvement in text quality. The ineffectiveness of grammar instruction may be explained by the fact that grammar is often practised in isolated sentences taken out of context, which improves students' mechanics but does not help them write better. In turn, the negative effect size for the process approach may be due the age of participants in the studies. Writers at the upper-elementary grade level still lack cognitive maturity to be consciously engaged in such complex processes as planning, drafting, reviewing and editing.

Hussain (2017) conducted a large scale-study study exploring writing practices in the FL classrooms of different primary and secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. A total of 400 students in the 6 to 14 age range and 160 teachers participated in the research, which sought to assess the effect of benchmarking strategies on L2 students' writing skills. These involved (1) brainstorming, (2) creative writing to produce a fable, (3) loop writing aiming at linking paragraphs according to the cause-and-effect pattern, (4) mini saga known as short writing with a focus on accuracy, and (5) speed writing. The research adopted a mixed-method approach to data analysis. To assess students' performance, teachers filled in a specially-designed assessment form, which was subjected to qualitative analysis. In turn, quantitative cross tabulation was used to find the correlation between different variables in the questionnaires on teaching practices filled out by the teachers. Out of five techniques, brainstorming was found to have the most significant impact on L2 students' written performance and positively correlated with the improvement in students' interest in a writing task. While the teachers positively assessed the combination of brainstorming with the other writing techniques in their classes, students in turn prioritized brainstorming, narrating fables, and loop writing over speed writing. The tasks integrating the practice of both reading and writing skills were found to have a positive significant impact on students' performance in terms of the delivery of ideas, syntax and vocabulary use.

Conesa et al. (2017) explored quantitatively the language learning potential of writing through learners' feedback processing in a languaging session (i.e., a session that engages students in meta-linguistic reflection on their errors) and the accuracy of their rewritten tasks. 30 students with A2 level of English proficiency, studying in a public secondary school in

Spain, participated in a two-week intervention involving two types of teacher feedback: direct and indirect. Firstly, the participants were asked to write their essay based on either of two writing prompts (A and B). Afterwards, the students who wrote their essays on prompt A were divided from those who wrote their essays on prompt B. Each group consisting of fifteen students received both types of feedback: one half was given direct feedback (i.e., the correction of all linguistic errors that the teacher found in their texts) and the other half was provided with indirect feedback (i.e., the correction of all linguistic errors that the participants did themselves by classifying each error in terms of word choice, verb form, preposition use, or sentence structure). The students further reflected on the provided corrections in writing during a thirty-minute written languaging session. One week later, the students had to rewrite their essays without corrections at hand in order for the researchers to trace the effect of their feedback processing. The learners' written explanations of the errors, the errors in texts and incorporations of corrections were coded and statistically analysed by means of Friedman tests, Wilcoxon signed rank tests and Mann Whitney U tests.

The results showed the positive effects of the learners' processing of two different feedback types on the accuracy of their rewritten texts. In both groups, correct incorporations significantly outnumbered unsuccessful and covert ones. The findings also revealed retention of feedback across time. However, only half of the errors highlighted with feedback were understood and corrected, which may be explained by their low English level and as a result, difficulty in understanding their errors when provided with implicit feedback. The participants' feedback processing featured much more explanations on grammar rather than lexis. Neither direct nor indirect feedback on errors facilitated the learners' noticing of their lexical gaps. No evidence was found to indicate that the learners had benefited more from indirect feedback in their detecting and understanding errors. Instead, the overall results suggest that the tasks supported by direct feedback generate more grammar reflection, which may eventually improve in learners' grammar.

To conclude this section, Table 1 summarizes all the empirical studies reviewed so far.

*Table 1. A summary of the empirical studies conducted in the context of elementary/secondary education*

| Empirical studies | Country | FL | Participants | Method & Instruments | Intervention & Metacognitive strategy | Focus | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Forbes** (2018) | England | German | 13–14 year olds public secondary school | **Qualitative** in-depth case study: direct observation stimulated recall interviews | A whole school-year strategy instruction in German & English: setting goals, identifying main ideas and key language features, structuring; self- and peer-assessment. | Strategy development Strategy transfer | A positive effect of the explicit SBI intervention on the SS' strategy use, accuracy and performance level. The average number of uncorrected errors per every 100 words declined towards the end. Greater involvement into planning and self-assessment skills. Cross-linguistic transfer of strategies —FL-L1—as a result of explicit instruction, especially planning and proofreading. |
| **Knospe** (2018) | Sweden | German | 16 year olds public upper-secondary school | **Qualitative** in-depth case study: Personal interviews after completing a task, stimulated by the recording files (by the keystroke-logging & screen-recording software) | 3-month strategy instruction in German on strategies for writing argumentative texts: brainstorming, mind-map, outline, compensation, revision, self- and peer-assessment. | Metacognitive knowledge and its type in the learner's post-task reflection | Only the instances of declarative knowledge, namely, knowledge about oneself as a writer, the task, strategies used and lack of linguistic competence. No traces of executive management, procedural or conditional knowledge. The importance of affective factors in FL learning. |
| **Koster et al.** (2015) | Netherlands | English German French | 12 year olds Public elementary school | **Quantitative** Meta-analysis of 59 writing intervention studies; | Short-term strategy + text +grammar instruction & pre-writing, peer assistance, feedback, evaluation | Evidence-based effective instructional | The most effective practices to improve SS' writing involved: goal setting, strategy instruction, text structure instruction, |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **effect size** for writing quality at post-test | process approach, goal setting, and revision. (expository/narrative/ informative/persuasive text types). | practices for teaching writing | feedback, and peer assistance. Grammar instruction and the process approach to writing did not show improvement in text quality. |
| **Hussain** (2017) | Saudi Arabia | English | 160 teachers 400 students in the 6 to 14 age range Primary & Secondary public school | **Mixed method Cross-tabulation technique** for teachers' questionnaires/ **assessment form** for students' performances | Short-term interventions, including the benchmarking techniques of brainstorming, fable writing, loop writing, speed writing, and mini saga. | The effect of brainstorming, fable writing, loop writing, speed writing, and mini saga on the writing of L2 learners | Brainstorming is found to have the most significant impact on SS' performance and positively correlates with the improvement in SS' interest in the writing task. SS prioritise brainstorming, narrating fables, and loop writing over fast writing. The tasks integrating both reading and writing skills correlate positively with better performance among SS as regards their representation of ideas, construction of phrases and vocabulary use. |
| **Conesa et at.** (2017) | Spain | English | 30 students at A2 level Public secondary school | **Quantitative** Friedman tests, Wilcoxon signed rank tests and Mann Whitney U tests | A two-week intervention, including two types of feedback (direct and indirect) during a written languaging session to trace SS' understanding of both grammar and non-grammar errors. | The effect of students' processing of direct and indirect feedback on the accuracy of their rewritten products | A positive effect of meta-linguistic reflection and written corrective feedback on grammatical accuracy at low L2 proficiency levels. Retention of feedback across time. No evidence to suggest an advantage for indirect feedback. Low proficiency level of Ss correlates with their increased difficulty in understanding errors when provided with implicit feedback. |

*2.2. Strategy-based writing instruction at the tertiary level*

Turguta and Kayaoğlu (2015) carried out a mixed-method study to explore the effect of using rubrics as a learning tool on EFL intermediate students' writing performance. The participants were 38 undergraduates, with the age range 18-20, attending an intensive English preparatory course at the university school of foreign languages in Turkey. These were further randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. Students in the experimental group received a four-week instruction on how to write compare-contrast and cause-effect essays using a rubric, which was organised around five components: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Students in the control group were taught the same contents, except for the rubric use, over the same period of time. Upon completing the intervention, both groups took a final exam with a focus on a compare-contrast essay. These final papers were assessed by three different professionals and the scores of the experimental group were compared with the scores of the control group by means of an ANOVA test and a T-test. In addition, students from the experimental group were interviewed to collect their perceptions on the rubric use in their learning process.

The quantitative data analysis showed that students from the experimental group outperformed those in the control group on their scores. In the interviews, students confirmed the beneficial effect of the rubric on their writing process. The great majority felt they became more aware of the success criteria for the essay and the process of assessment. There was an overall agreement on the fact that both self-assessment and peer-assessment of their writing drafts by means of the rubric contributed to their better understanding of the reasons behind the flaws in the papers and possible solutions. As regards the categories of the rubric, the students reported that they made greater gains in terms of text coherence, cohesion and vocabulary. The corrective feedback and practice on lexis encouraged a greater use of both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries, which made them more efficient in searching for and selecting appropriate words. There were also some students who felt that the category of language use had a positive effect on their writing, since, instead of simplifying structures, they began to use more grammatically complex sentences. The category of mechanics was largely ignored, since spelling tended to be corrected by software programs before paper submission.

Another mixed-method study comes from De Silva and Graham (2015), who explored the impact of a twenty-four-week SBI intervention on undergraduate students' writing strategy

use across high and low proficiency levels. In total, 72 Science undergraduates, enrolled in the *English for Academic Purposes* course at a state university in Sri Lanka, participated in the research. These students were further split into two groups –experimental and control– and each group was provided with a different type of instruction throughout the whole intervention. The experimental group received the strategy instruction as a series of two-hour workshops. These included a thorough explanation of the strategies to be used --task analysis, planning, formulating, self-monitoring, resourcing, assessing and revision-- as well as daily writing activities and metacognitive homework tasks. In turn, the control group followed a series of traditional writing sessions without strategy-based activities. Data on the students' strategy use before and after the intervention were collected through questionnaires, diaries and stimulated recall interviews.

The quantitative results showed that students from the experimental group more frequently used task analysis, planning, self-monitoring and revision after the intervention. Out of these, planning and self-monitoring showed a statistically significant increase. The qualitative results revealed that students from the experimental group, regardless of their proficiency level, used a wider range of planning strategies and combined them with others (e.g., pre-task planning with task analysis) in a more controlled manner. The stimulated recall procedures after strategy instruction proved to have had a positive effect on the low proficiency students' use of self-monitoring strategies. They showed an increased improvement in identifying problems, suggesting corrections, and checking the appropriateness of words, relevance and accuracy of their writing. As for the control group, the high proficiency students did employ planning strategies but in an inconsistent way, whereas the low proficiency students' use of planning was almost absent.

De Silva and Graham's findings align with the results of the quantitative study carried out by Fahim and Rajabi (2015), who sought to explore the effects of an explicit self-regulatory strategy development (SRSD) instruction on the writing performance and motivation of EFL undergraduates. The participants were 60 Iranian pre-intermediate students at ages ranging from 19 to 26 and majoring English Language Teaching at Islamic Azad University. Half of the participants (N= 30) were assigned to the experimental group and received a ten-session SRSD instruction on persuasive writing, with special attention paid to such strategies as goal-setting in collaboration, planning, self-monitoring (i.e., content and production monitoring) and

evaluating. The didactic sequence was designed following the six stages of the SRSD model: (1) Develop Background Knowledge; (2) Discuss It; (3) Model It; (4) Memorize It; (5) Support It; and (6) Independent Performance (Santangelo, Harris, & Graham, 2008, p. 82). Data were collected before and after the SRSD intervention through a test of English proficiency, a validated Writing Motivation Questionnaire and two persuasive essay prompts. To determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the students' written performance on the pre- and post-test, an independent sample T-test was carried out. The results revealed the effectiveness of the SRSD instruction on the pre-intermediate students' writing performance and their intrinsic motivation to write persuasively. The students from the experimental group received higher scores on their post-test persuasive essays and provided much more arguments to support their claims as compared to those from the control group.

Kim (2016) carried out a case study to explore the role of metacognitive reflection on the work done in class in raising adult L2 students' awareness of metacognition and improving their self-regulation. Two Asian students, a Chinese female and a Japanese male, were chosen for the examination of their performance in detail. Both were enrolled in an intensive academic English course within a short-term Study Abroad programme at a US university and received an eight-week instruction on academic writing at a high-intermediate level. The learning intervention adopted a process-oriented approach, focusing on writing an essay of descriptive, narrative, and comparison-contrast typology. Subsequently, three timed writing tasks were programmed to assess students' performance as regards these three text-types. Throughout the intervention, the concepts of metacognition, attention and strategy were first explained by the instructor and then applied by the students through discussion and free-write activities. Besides, to reflect on their writing process, strategy use and results, the participants filled out the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) and the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT) at the beginning of the intervention and before completing the last writing task. During the class time, the items of each instrument were thoroughly discussed as a group and all unclear categories were clarified by the instructor. The data drawn from these tools were also used for qualitative analysis.

The findings of the case study point to the relevance of written metacognitive reflection for the participants' self-regulation and strategy use. Getting students metacognitively engaged in their writing activities and providing them with explicit discussion upon completing their

tasks had a positive effect on their self-efficacy and motivation for writing. Kim also found out that the alignment of students' personal goals and the objectives of the writing course they are enrolled in may result in their greater self-regulation. Despite being provided with the same opportunity for reflection, her participants used their reflective time in a different way. The Chinese female pondered over what she knew about the task, how it agreed with her personal goals to improve her writing skills, how to proceed and what strategies to choose for each stage. Based on her knowledge about herself as a writer and about the task, she planned a set of strategies for herself to tackle a similar task more efficiently in the future. In other words, her personal reflections showcased the instances of the three types of metacognitive knowledge and self-regulatory behaviour. As for the Japanese male, he tended to reflect on what he liked about writing, what difficulties he faced when approaching the tasks and inconsistency between his personal aspirations regarding the writing skill and the course goals. While his reflections generally revealed his knowledge of the task and the challenges to be faced, the strategies to address a similar task in the future were considered on rare occasions. This lack of strategic knowledge might well have resulted from the difficulty in visualizing "accessible *future writing self*" and "connect[ing] that *future self* to the attainment of specific writing skills" (Kim, 2016, p.25).

One more recent study carried out by Sun and Wang (2020) explores the relationships between EFL undergraduate students' writing proficiency, their writing self-efficacy beliefs and the use of writing self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies. The participants were 319 sophomore Chinese students, 208 males and 106 females with the age range from 18 to 25, enrolled in the *College English Course* on reading and writing at two universities in China. The participants' scores on the writing and translation parts of a test upon completing the *College English Course* were used to gauge their English writing proficiency. During the course, two questionnaires were administered to measure students' English self-efficacy beliefs and SRL strategy use --*Reviewing Strategies*, *Seeking Opportunities Strategies*, and *Self-Evaluation Strategies*. The means and standard deviations were drawn from the two questionnaires and then Pearson correlation coefficients were used to represent the relationships between three sets of data.

The results revealed moderate self-efficacy in students' English writing. The highest scores on the scale were related to organisation, whereas the lowest ones were attributed to the

use of English writing, suggesting that students felt to be more effective in brainstorming and paragraphing than creating a text for a specific communicative purpose. This lack of mastery, as Sun and Wang further speculate, might be due to the product-oriented approach and examination-driven assessment prevailing in the FL classroom in China. As for the correlation between their self-efficacy beliefs and performance, the more confident in grammar and spelling they felt, the better, as it seemed to them, they performed. As regards SRL strategies, students occasionally resorted to goal-setting and planning strategies at the pre-writing stage and devoted much more time to drafting and wording when writing. The strategies related to taking the initiative and self-rewarding for making progress in writing were the least frequently used. A statistically significant correlation, albeit small in scope, was found between students' SRL strategy use and scores on their writing test. In other words, the more opportunities they sought to practice their writing, review their notes and revise their tasks, the higher scores they achieved on their tests.

As a conclusion, Table 2 provides a summary of the empirical studies reviewed in this subsection.

*Table 2. A summary of the empirical studies conducted in the context of tertiary education*

| Empirical studies | Country | FL | Participants | Method & Instruments | Intervention & Metacognitive strategy | Focus | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turguta & Kayaoğlu (2015) | Turkey | English | 38 undergraduates attending the intensive EFL program at the School of Foreign Languages Karadeniz Technical University | **Mixed-method** ANOVA, t-test & content analysis<br><br>Final essays & semi-structured interviews | 4-week instruction on how to write compare-contrast & cause-effect essays, involving the use of a rubric in creating a final product | The effect of using rubrics as a learning tool on Ss' writing performance | Results reveal the benefits of using the rubric on SS' writing performance: greater gains were achieved in terms of text coherence, cohesion and vocabulary. Feedback sessions, based on the rubric and involving both self- & peer-assessment, are shown to have a positive effect on the quality of SS' final papers. Improvements in language use & strategic use of dictionaries. |
| De Silva & Graham (2015) | Sri Lanka | English | 72 science undergraduates in their 2nd year enrolled in the English for Academic Purposes course<br>A state university in Sri Lanka | **Mixed-method** Descriptive statistics for frequency of use for strategies & content analysis.<br><br>Questionnaires, diaries & stimulated recall interviews | 24-week writing strategy instruction, involving<br>task analysis, planning, self-monitoring and revision | The impact of a strategy writing instruction on Ss' strategy use across high and low proficiency levels and change in frequency of use of planning and self-monitoring | After SBI, a more frequent use of task analysis, planning, self-monitoring and revision. Planning and self-monitoring showed a statistically significant increase in use. Ss, regardless of their proficiency level, used a wider range of planning strategies in combinations with others (e.g., pre-task planning with task analysis) in a more controlled manner. Stimulated recall after strategy instruction proved to be the most effective technique for Ss' self-monitoring, especially at a low-level proficiency |
| Fahim & Rajabi (2015) | Iran | English | 60 pre-intermediate EFL learners majoring English Language Teaching | **Quantitative** Independent t-test comparing the performance of the | 10-session SRSD instruction on persuasive writing, with special attention paid to | The effects of an explicit SRSD instruction on SS' | Results reveal the effectiveness of SRSD instructional treatment on SS' writing performance of a persuasive essay and intrinsic motivation. The importance of |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | in the Faculty of Foreign Languages Islamic Azad University | experimental & control groups on the pre- & post-test | such strategies as goal-setting, planning, monitoring and assessing. | writing performance and motivation | teacher scaffolding of self-regulation strategies and the process-oriented approach to writing is highlighted, especially for SS at a low proficiency level and with behavioural disorders. |
| Kim (2016) | USA | English | 2 Asian students (Japanese male & Chinese female) in a short-term study abroad program at a US university | **Qualitative** in-depth case study: MAI, WAT and thematic analysis of Ss' oral & written reflective statements | 8-week intensive English academic writing course based on process-oriented approach + in-class discussion of metacognition and its value, discussion of learned attention, MAI, WAT (Descriptive, narrative, and comparison-contrast essays) | The role of written reflection in raising adult L2 students' awareness of metacognition and improving their self-regulation | Written metacognitive reflection and explicit discussion upon completing the tasks are shown to contribute to Ss' self-efficacy and motivation for writing. The alignment of personal and course goals may potentially lead to greater self-regulation. The instances of three types of knowledge and self-regulation were found when the course objectives were in agreement with S's personal short-and long-term writing goals. |
| Sun &Wang (2020) | China | English | 319 sophomore Chinese students two universities in northwest China | **Quantitative** Writing scores on test Questionnaires Descriptive statistics Pearson correlation coefficients | *College English Course* based on the product-oriented approach (without explicit instruction on strategy use) + national standardized test | The relationships between EFL undergraduate Ss' writing proficiency, writing self-efficacy beliefs and use of writing SRL strategies. | Moderate self-efficacy in students' English writing, as a result of the product-oriented approach. Infrequent use of strategies. Low self-efficacy in creating texts is related to the lack of opportunities to practise real-life communication. Reviewing and Seeking Opportunities Strategies are shown to predict higher writing outcomes on tests. |

*2.3. The overall picture that emerged from the studies reviewed*

The list of the studies reviewed above is undeniably modest to be able to make definitive and loud claims. The good thing is that all of them revealed a positive effect of the explicit SBI intervention on students' strategy use, accuracy, performance level and even strategy transfer to another language. However, the snapshot of the findings also points to the insufficiency of metacognitive writing instruction. Unfortunately, solid writing programs, as it was described in Forbes (2018), are an exception rather than a rule in the FL classroom. At the elementary and secondary level, writing practices placing emphasis on raising students' strategy use emerge mostly in the context of case studies or short-scale research, as are the cases of Knospe (2018), Hussain (2017) and Koster et al. (2015). Besides, the interventions created for these occasions feature the teacher as the primary audience for written productions and little cooperation and collaboration among students. These have been the issues of common concern in other studies (Graham, 2019). At the tertiary level, SBI interventions take place largely in the context of intensive language programmes for academic purposes or study abroad and revolve around persuasive writing in the format of an essay (Turguta & Kayaoğlu, 2015; Fahim & Rajabi, 2015; Kim 2016). These interventions feature more collaboration among students, but still the primary audience for their written productions remains the teacher.

While many school teachers consider writing primarily as an individual activity, more and more scholars argue that cooperative and collaborative learning is critical for building students' confidence in their writing and managing social skills (Cassany, 2009; Scrivener, 2009). Furthermore, creating a piece of writing just for handing it in to a teacher for correction has little in common with real-life practices and rarely helps students considerably improve their writing skill. As Scrivener (2009) rightly suggests, "if students are only writing 'to please the teacher', there is probably relatively low motivation, and the quality of writing may be compromised…" (p. 201). Therefore, students' written texts should target at a wider audience and while writing, they should be engaged in cooperative and collaborative learning to boost their confidence and social skills.

While it is true that case studies on their own do not allow for quantitative analysis and are often criticised for low validity, they do provide an in-depth description of a specific subject and causes of a phenomenon. In this respect, Knospe (2018) and Forbes's (2018) findings are encouraging in terms of teaching implications. Knospe places focus on the affective factors in

FL learning, such as linguistic insecurity, and asserts that these may stir up false assumptions in a learner about their capacities and have an adverse effect on their regulation management. Therefore, she highlights the importance of raising learners' awareness of themselves as writers and reflection on the work done in class for their metacognitive development. In light of these results, Myhill's claim that "we may well develop better writers not by doing more writing but by generating more thinking about writing" is pretty well founded (2006, p.6). The implications of Forbes (2018) are that SBI interventions contribute not only to students' greater involvement into pre-writing planning and self-assessment skills, but also facilitate cross-linguistic transfer of strategies —FL-L1—as a result of explicit instruction.

Hussain's study (2017) reveals the positive effect of brainstorming on students' interest in a writing task. He also encourages teachers to engage learners in those tasks that integrate both reading and writing, since these may contribute to their better performance as regards the delivery of ideas, syntax and vocabulary use. Conesa and colleagues' findings (2017) suggest that corrective feedback, regardless of its type, may prove to be ineffective if students fail to grasp or notice the reason behind the flaws. In order for students to process feedback accurately, teachers are very much encouraged "to delve into the noticing and understanding of errors rather than inferring students' processing of errors from performance" (p. 198). The importance of feedback processing for language development has been also reported by Manchón (2011; 2018). Finally, Koster et al.' s findings (2015) show that holistic assessment, which involves both summative evaluation of students' writings using a scoring rubric and formative measures during instruction based on the same rubric, supports them in internalizing the success criteria and improving their writing performance.

Turning to the empirical studies conducted in the context of tertiary education, it is worth mentioning the pedagogical implications of Fahim and Rajabi's research (2015), who highlight the importance of explicit teacher scaffolding of self-regulation strategy and the process-oriented approach in guiding low proficiency students towards independent performance. Similarly, Sun and Wang (2020) recommend adopting the SRSD approach to writing in the FL classroom, with a special focus on review and evaluation, to boost learners' writing self-efficacy and regulation. Besides, as the scholars further suggest, peer modelling, constructive feedback on the spot and emotional support should be part and parcel of the learning process in class. In order to provide learners with opportunities to practise real and

meaningful communication, "it is imperative for EFL teachers to focus on the instruction of various genres of writing and emphasize the pragmatic aspect of writing in both academic and practical contexts" (p.14). In turn, Kim (2016) asserts that "Individuals' knowledge of themselves, or person knowledge, encompasses self-efficacy, motivation, and writing apprehension […] all of which must be considered in relation to their knowledge of the writing task in order to develop higher levels of strategic knowledge" (p. 25).

The implications of Turguta and Kayaoğlu's study (2015) highlight the importance of co-creating a rubric with EFL learners for a writing task. Once they understand the success criteria and how the rubric is used to check their progress, they can better self-monitor their own writing process. Besides, learners should be actively involved in reviewing and evaluating activities in order for them "to recognize the merits and shortcomings in their own and peers' writing performance, understand the reasons for these shortcomings and negotiate with their peers and teachers possible improvements" (p. 56). Finally, De Silva and Graham (2015) suggest getting both high and low attainment students involved in reflection —thinking aloud—upon completing their tasks in class. Such a practice can potentially increase their metacognitive knowledge and contribute to a more efficient use of self-monitoring strategies.

## 3. TEACHING PROPOSAL

Considering the pedagogical implications of the interventions reported in the previous studies and the profile of their participants, this four-hour didactic proposal is addressed to a mixed-ability group of students with the age range from 16 to 18 and with language levels ranging from A2 to B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The group features the students who feel unconfident about their level and mostly prefer to work individually or at most in pairs in class. What is more, the writing skill presents the greatest challenge for the great majority. Therefore, my intention is essentially to promote collaborative and cooperative learning by engaging them into in-class pair and group activities, to foster their writing skills, and to raise their awareness of their learning process (metacognition) and strategies they use when planning, developing and editing a writing task.

The didactic sequence revolves around vocabulary related to ethics and culminates in a task – to write a formal letter of complaint about an ethical problem. The students will find out that a well-known cosmetics company tests its products, which they buy on a regular basis, on animals. They will then write a letter to this company to complain about this issue, giving their

reasons why the company's behaviour is unethical and trying to persuade the managers, who will be their intended audience, to reconsider their strategies and change their behaviour. In order to accomplish this task, students will look at several formal letter samples and explore their format and language, practise relevant grammatical features and co-create a rubric with criteria for a good formal letter of complaint. In groups, they will further plan their own formal letters, elaborating on the reasons why the company's behaviour is wrong and presenting these ideas to the class. The class will vote and choose those arguments that seem to be the most persuasive to take action. Individually, students will develop those arguments in their letters, following the text type conventions and appropriate language features. To make this final task more tangible and relevant for their needs, I have included the creation of an educational poster which will serve as a visual demonstration of what the students have learned about formal letter writing. Therefore, when all the letters are written, the students, in groups of five, will create a poster illustrating a step-by-step guide to formal letter writing as regards its format, content, and language features. The target audience for these posters will be their lower grade students. The detailed description of each session with the links to the teaching resources can be found in *Appendix I*.

### *3.1. Genre and general contents*

The choice of this particular genre –a formal letter– is motivated primarily by the fact that it is often included as an assessment task in an English language syllabus at the Batxillerat level, whose contents and competences are regulated by Decree 142/2008 – DOGC/5183[2]. As was mentioned in the Introduction section, my goal is to design a realistic learning intervention which would fit in well with the context of Catalan Secondary Education. Accordingly, the contents integrated into this didactic sequence and competences involved are based on the current Catalan legislation and span three dimensions specified in the official curriculum, namely:

**1. Communicative dimension**

Block 1. Participation in oral, written and audio-visual interactions:

[2] L'ordenació dels ensenyaments de batxillerat - Llengües estrangeres (pp. 59077-59082): http://xtec.gencat.cat/web/.content/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/0059/83149087-e159-41c6-a9b3-a9693cdd8f19/decret_batxillerat.pdf

- Participation in the discussions on the topics related to values and ethical issues, expressing and arguing opinions.

Block 2. Comprehension of oral, written and audio-visual discourses:

- Critical understanding of the main discourse function and intention of a written formal text (a letter);
- Application of comprehension strategies to obtain information and interpret the content of written texts (formal letter samples);
- Identification of the main ideas and extraction of specific information from written texts.

Block 3. Production of oral, written and audio-visual discourses:

- Use of techniques in organizing ideas for the elaboration of a written discourse: brainstorming and mind mapping;
- Organization of the ideas and structuring of a formal letter in paragraphs according to their functions in the whole text;
- Production of a persuasive text, such as a formal letter of complaint, resorting to argumentation and making suggestions.

Block 4. Knowledge of language functioning:

- Identification of the basic features that characterize formal letter writing and basic resources to adapt a written text.

**2. Research and information management dimension**

- Research on the Internet about the cosmetics company to which a formal letter will be addressed and presentation of the collected information in a clear and concise form;
- Search for and selection of relevant information to create an educational poster.

**3. Plurilingual and intercultural dimension**

- Use of the register appropriate to the context, interlocutor, communicative intention, and channel.

*3.2. Expected learning outcomes and competences*

The expected learning outcomes and competences after conducting the designed activities and task are as follows:

| COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE | PERSONAL & INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE | MANAGING & PROCESSING INFO COMPETENCE | DIGITAL COMPETENCE |
|---|---|---|---|
| • To critically understand the main discourse function and intention of a written formal text (a formal letter of complaint).<br>• To identify basic features that characterize formal letter writing (relation between sender and receiver, discursive purpose, degree of formality, formal language expressions, format and layout).<br>• To use strategies for elaborating and organising ideas: brainstorming and mind mapping.<br>• To organize ideas and to structure a formal letter in paragraphs according to their functions in the whole text.<br>• To write a persuasive text, such as a formal letter of complaint about an ethical problem, resorting to argumentation.<br>• To design and present an educational poster on formal letter writing. | • To interact with other students in the class and manage social skills, such as cooperation and negotiation.<br>• To revise, using self- and peer-assessment tools, a formal letter and incorporate linguistic and discursive elements to improve its content and form, communicative effectiveness and presentation. | • To search for, extract and process relevant information on the Internet and present the collected data in a clear and concise form. | • To use digital learning resources – websites, blogs, Prezi, etc. - to collect information on a cosmetics company (e.g., company products, product testing policy, contact details, feedback from customers, etc.) and a poster. |

*Figure 1. The expected learning outcomes and competences involved*

### *3.3. Metacognitive writing strategies to be employed*

In this learning intervention, the metacognitive strategies for supporting students' writing are as follows: collaborative and cooperative learning, the use of exemplars and a compare/contrast

graphic organiser, a co-create rubric for a formal letter of complaint, self- and peer-assessment, modeling during instruction, brainstorming, mind mapping, and outlining.

Collaborative and cooperative learning forms the basis for this learning intervention: students are first introduced to strategic knowledge about the use of metacognitive techniques, such as brainstorming, mind mapping, outlining, evaluating, and then they employ these strategies while working in pairs and small groups. This, as Chatzipantelli et al. (2014) argue, will contribute not only to their social interaction but also cognitive development. The other technique 'exemplars' is used to make students reflect on bad and good examples of a written piece (i.e., a good letter of complaint and a bad letter of complaint). In turn, the compare/contrast graphic organiser is designed to support them in drawing up the list of strong and weak qualities of those exemplars. Based on this list, students are encouraged to build a rubric for a good letter of complaint, which will be further used as a self- and peer-assessment tool. Modeling during instruction suggests providing students with a good example of a letter, which they will be using as a model for their own productions, and a series of activities that will help them reveal its overall organization, the function of each stage and salient language features. Finally, such techniques as brainstorming, mind mapping and outlining will help students activate their prior knowledge on letter writing, generate new ideas and plan their own letter drafts. Some basic tools to promote these strategies are a Venn diagram, a T-chart and a paragraph plan.

### *3.4. Assessment procedures*

This teaching intervention employs both formative and summative assessment procedures, which are summarised in Figure 1.

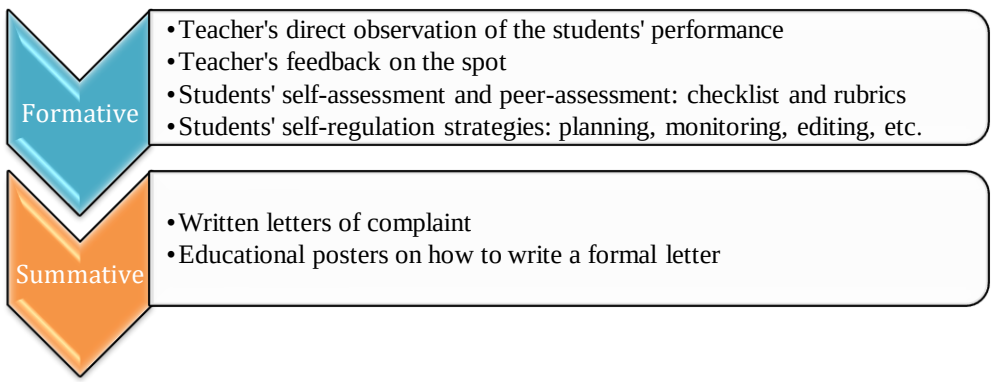


*Figure 2. Assessment types*

The **formative assessment** process takes place during instruction and learning activities in order for a teacher to register problems and clarify students' doubts on the spot. In this proposal, this includes the teacher's direct observation of the students' performance in written and oral activities and timely feedback. The students' self- and peer-assessment and use of self-regulation strategies also fall into this category and will be monitored by the teacher through the activities involving brainstorming, planning, monitoring and evaluating. While mind-mapping and planning activities will help the students outline their thoughts into paragraphs, the checklist and rubrics will guide them as regards the format, content and language of their products. In turn, **summative assessment**, which occurs at the end of the teaching intervention, includes the students' written letters and educational posters on how to write a formal letter targeted at lower grade students.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to explore teachers' use of metacognitive writing strategies in the FL classroom and considering the pedagogical implications, to propose a learning intervention aimed at developing metacognitive writing strategies and self-regulation in high-school students in the context of Catalan education. The findings of the studies reviewed point to the beneficial effect of explicit SBI interventions on FL learners' metacognitive awareness, motivation, self-efficacy and writing proficiency. In brief, the critical overview of the studies carried out in the contexts of elementary/secondary education allows for the following conclusions:

- Learners' written texts should target at a wider audience and while writing, learners should be actively engaged in cooperative and/or collaborative learning to enhance their confidence and social skills (Knospe, 2018; Forbes, 2018);
- Linguistic insecurity stirs up false assumptions in learners about their capacities and has an adverse effect on their regulation management. Thus, learners' reflection on the work done in class and greater self-awareness of themselves as writers (declarative knowledge) are key strategies for their progress (Knospe, 2018);
- Brainstorming stimulates learners' interest in a writing task. In turn, a writing task that integrates both reading and writing may contribute to learners' better performance as regards the delivery of ideas, syntax and vocabulary use (Hussain, 2017);

- SBI interventions contribute not only to learners' greater involvement into planning and the development of self-assessment skills, but also facilitate cross-linguistic transfer of strategies —from FL to L1—as a result of explicit instruction (Koster et al. 2015; Forbes, 2018);
- In order for corrective feedback on a writing task to be effective, it should be explicit and explanatory so that learners, especially those with a low level of proficiency, can notice and understand the reason behind the flaws (Cornesa et al., 2017);
- Holistic assessment, which involves both summative and formative measures during instruction and learning activities, appears to be more beneficial for FL learners' writing performance (Koster et al. 2015);

As for the studies conducted in the context of tertiary education, some of the conclusions are as follows:

- Co-creating a rubric with learners for a writing assignment supports their internalization of success criteria, improves strategic behaviour, and creates transparency for marking (Turguta & Kayaoğlu, 2015);
- Written metacognitive reflection and oral discussion upon completing a writing task in class contribute to EFL learners' self-efficacy, motivation for writing, and more efficient use of self-monitoring strategies, especially at a low proficiency level (De Silva & Graham, 2015; Kim, 2016);
- Writer-related factors, such as the alignment of his/her personal goals to improve the writing skill and the objectives of the writing course/task, may potentially lead to greater self-regulation (Kim, 2016);
- An SRSD instruction, with an explicit focus on goal-setting, planning, monitoring and assessing, significantly contributes to learners' self-efficacy, writing performance and intrinsic motivation (Fahim & Rajabi, 2015; Sun &Wang, 2020);
- The instruction of various genres of writing, with special attention paid to their pragmatic function in different social contexts, creates opportunities for real and meaningful communication (Sun & Wang, 2020).

Based on some of these insights, a four-hour SBI proposal, focusing on pre-writing, drafting, evaluating and editing a formal letter of complaint, has been designed. The rationale

behind the choice of the genre, the expected learning outcomes, the strategies and assessment procedures to be employed have been described in detail. However, it would be worthwhile to discuss the educational implications of this didactic proposal, as well as to acknowledge the limitations.

### *4.1. Implications and limitations*

The major implication of this SBI instructional sequence is related to co-creating the rubric with students for a formal letter of complaint. By using this strategy, teachers not only support their students in internalizing a set of successful criteria for a specific task, but also engage them in higher order thinking and create transparency for marking. In order for students to understand the way a rubric works and to further use it as a self- and peer-assessment tool for their own task, teacher scaffolding is key. It is essential to support learners first in determining success criteria for the task, and only after that explain how to arrange these in a rubric. In my proposal, the exemplars of a formal letter and a compare-contrast graphic organiser serve the purpose of drawing up strong qualities. In turn, the blank rubric, which already defines four main categories and performance levels, offers the possibility of arranging those strong qualities in the respective cells. As this didactic proposal is addressed to a group of students who have not had any experience with rubrics, starting with a partial draft of a rubric, which involves the structure, categories and performance levels, will considerably facilitate their understanding and save class time. However, if learners are mature and adequately prepared to deal with this learning strategy, they may be actively engaged in building the rubric in groups, with a focus on a particular section, or even developing the rubric from scratch, based on the learning outcomes for the task. Regardless of the approach chosen for constructing the rubric, it is important to model its use afterwards.

Grouping is one more aspect to be taken into consideration. The use of various interaction patterns throughout a session caters for diversity of levels in a group and provides more variety, thus making the session interesting and dynamic. Therefore, the teaching proposal involves a variety of grouping strategies (i.e., whole class, small groups, pairs, individual work) to address learner diversity in the mixed-ability group. However, collaborative and cooperative learning is prioritized. A set of pair and group activities has been planned to promote students' linguistic confidence, interdependence and mutual support. In order to achieve these results, pairwork should revolve around students of more or less the

same proficiency level so that they can discuss, read and practise vocabulary and grammar in collaboration. In turn, work in small groups should be based on the interaction between students with mixed language proficiency and aimed at cooperation. In this way, less proficient students can learn from more proficient ones while being engaged in more cognitively challenging activities, such as generating ideas, constructing a rubric, designing a poster, etc.

A few words should be said about corrective feedback on students' performance in oral and written activities. The importance of feedback processing for students' language development cannot be overestimated. It is essential for teachers to register problems and clarify doubts on the spot, paying special attention to low proficiency students who tend to have a passive role and keep quiet. This is especially important when students are engaged in the self-assessment and peer-assessment activities. Feedback, regardless of whether it is provided by a peer or a teacher, should be explicit so that students can process it accurately. In case low proficiency pairs take more time to complete these activities and/or need more support, it is imperative for teachers to allow for time flexibility, even though this could imply extending the length of the instructional sequence by one more session.

As a conclusion, it is necessary to note that this four-hour SBI proposal has a number of limitations that could be addressed in the future. As already mentioned, it has been inspired by my personal experience as an EFL teacher and some of the insights from the ten studies reviewed above. This list is undeniably modest to be able to make definitive claims about the use of co-creating rubrics, corrective feedback management and explicit SBI interventions. A future critical review of the strategy-based writing practices employed in the FL classroom should definitely extend its scope. Furthermore, the didactic sequence, as it is presented in this thesis, has never been implemented in a high school and thus, students' motivation and possible achievements remain unknown. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to give it a try in a state secondary school and collect data on whether its instructional practices achieved the intended outcomes. I cherish the belief that this proposal can be one of the avenues for changing writing practices in the FL classroom, as well as a springboard for future examination of its relevance.

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## APPENDICES

*APPENDIX I. Description of the 4-h didactic sequence*

In the session plans, the shorthand symbols stand for: T=teacher; S=an individual student; Ss=students as a class; T→C=the teacher working with the whole class; S,S,S=students working on their own; S↔S=students working in pairs; G→GG =group presenting before other groups; GG=students working in groups.

**Session nº 1. Writing a formal letter**

| Phase | Time Interaction | Activities | Aims | Teaching resources | Anticipated problems/Possible solutions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Opening** | 6<br>GG | T briefly explains the main objective of the unit (i.e., writing a formal letter of complaint and creating an educational poster on how to write formal letters).<br>T puts Ss into groups of three and provides each group with a Venn diagram. Ss brainstorm the ideas on how formal and informal letters are different and how they are alike. | To activate prior knowledge on letter writing. | Venn diagram | Ss may not be familiar with a Venn diagram. T will then draw the overlapping circles on the blackboard and provide some examples to visually represent how the diagram is used to draw the similarities and differences between two concepts. |
| | 4<br>T→C | Ss come back together as a class and T displays a T-chart showing the differences between formal and informal letters. Ss tick similar attributes in their Venn Diagrams. | To visually represent the differences between two types of a letter in terms of the layout and the | Projector<br>T-chart Slide 2 | If the projector is not available, T prepares a worksheet that will include all the visual material needed and |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | degree of formality: greetings, endings, and language. | | activities planned for this session (see Appendix I) |
| **Main** | 15<br>GG | T provides two exemplars (one bad and one good) of a formal letter and a graphic organizer to support them in comparing/contrasting two pieces. Ss compare and contrast two examples in groups of three. | To compare/contrast two letters of complaint against a set of criteria specified in the graphic organiser. | Two letter samples<br>Graphic organizer | Ss may experience difficulties in working with the graphic organizer. T will then move among the groups and provide initial support. |
| | 15<br>T→C<br>S,S,S | T projects an animated ppt and goes over the organizer together with the class. Ss fill out any sections in the graphic organizer that they may miss while working in groups, and decide which is the best letter and say why. S,S,S draw strong qualities of a formal letter of complaint in their copybooks. | To help Ss determine success criteria for a formal letter of complaint. | Projector<br>Slides 3-5 | If students have difficulty in understanding the formal letter layout, the teacher will provide the following worksheet to facilitate their work. |
| | 10<br>T→C<br>GG | T asks Ss to assign a letter to each strong quality of a piece based on the following categories: **F** for format; **C** for content; **L** for language/audience; **A** for accuracy. T provides a blank rubric and Ss, in groups, organize the strong qualities around the four categories. | To link each success criterion with a respective category: format, content, language / audience and accuracy in the blank rubric | Blank rubric | T moves among the groups and makes sure that all the strong points have been categorized and organised correctly in the rubric. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Closing** | **5**<br>T→C | T sets homework for the next session. T provides a sample letter and asks Ss to assess it according to the criteria in the rubric. | T gives Ss a chance to assess a sample letter using the rubric that they have just elaborated. | Sample letter | T makes a final printed copy of the rubric for each student and hands it out in the 3rd session, when Ss will be using it as a peer-assessment tool.<br><br>At this point, T may also ask Ss to think of groups they want to work in to design the poster in the final session. |

**Session nº 2. A formal letter of complaint about an ethical issue: purpose, audience and context**

| Phase | Time Interaction | Activities | Aims | Teaching resources | Anticipated problems/Possible solutions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Opening** | 5<br>T→C | T projects the letter that Ss had to assess using the rubric they had elaborated in the previous session. T goes through the four categories in the rubric and elicits Ss' feedback on its quality: good points and points to be improved. | To check /discuss the homework | Projector<br><br>Sample letter | Some Ss could come without homework. They will be encouraged to do it as T discusses the letter in open class. |
| | 5<br>T→C | T projects a photo that shows an advertisement with sexist content. T asks the following questions to the whole class and elicits a range of answers:<br>*What does the advertisement show?*<br>*What product might it be advertising?* | To warm up and pre-teach key vocabulary (e.g., sexist, appalled, gender equality, share my feeling). | Advertisement | If the projector is not available, T prepares a worksheet that will include all the visual material needed and activities planned for this session (see Appendix II). |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *Why might some people find certain advertisements offensive?* | | | |
| **Main** | 10<br>S↔S<br>T→C | T puts Ss into pairs to read a letter of complaint about the sexist content of the advertisement and reflect on the following questions: *Who wrote it? For whom? Where was the letter published? What is the writer complaining about?*<br>Answers are discussed as a class. | To reveal its social purpose, audience and context. | A model of a letter of complaint about an ethical issue | |
| | 5<br>T→C<br>S↔S | T focuses on the overall organization of the letter and elicits the answers to the following questions:<br>*Can you identify stages in the letter (e.g., addresses, date, greeting, body and closure, signature)?*<br>*Can you describe the function of each paragraph in the body?*<br>T gets Ss to discuss first with a peer, and then checks the answers as a whole class. | To reveal its overall organization and the function of each stage. | A model of a letter of complaint about an ethical issue | If necessary, T points out the position of the address. T may also revise with Ss the rule that we use *Yours faithfully* when the letter starts with *Dear Sir/Madam,* and we use *Yours sincerely* when the letter starts with the name of the person. |
| | 10<br>T→C<br>S↔S | T focuses on the formal language used in the letter and elicits that we avoid using contractions and tend to include more passive forms to sound more polite in formal letters.<br>T gives 1-2 min to read the letter again and find any uncontracted and passive verb forms. | To analyse key formal language features | A model of the letter of complaint | If Ss have difficulty in identifying passive verb forms, T may display the following ppt and revise the passive. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | T asks Ss to look at the bold formal expressions in the letter and match them with the following expressions (projected or in the worksheet): 1. Best wishes; 2. understand; 3. feel the same as me; 4. soon; 5. shocked; 6. tell.<br>T asks Ss to identify other expressions that they could use in any letter of complaint (e.g., I am writing to..., While I appreciate that…, ...do/does little to improve the situations, I look forward to hearing from you). | | about an ethical issue | |
| | 5<br>S,S,S<br>T→C | T asks Ss to match the informal sentences with the ones from formal letters (projected or in the worksheet). T checks answers as a class and elicits what the purpose of each letter is (e.g. to apply for a job; to inform someone that they've lost their job; to book a hotel room, etc.). | To match informal expressions with the formal ones and their purposes. | Informal vs. Formal match | |
| | 5<br>S↔S<br>T→C | T focuses on the useful linkers (projected or in the worksheet). Ss match the set of useful linkers to their function (addition, cause, contrast, result, purpose, opinions, etc.) | To analyse linkers, which could be further used in formal letters, against their functions. | Linkers vs. Functions | Ss may not understand some linkers. T provides either explanation in English or translation if still unclear. T also checks that Ss understand how all the linkers are used (e.g., also - to join words/clauses; Since/as - to express reasons; etc.). |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Closing** | 10<br>T→C | T brings the lesson to a conclusion by previewing learning for the upcoming session: writing the cosmetics company a letter of complaint about testing its products on animals. Ss have to independently research on the topic --*Testing Cosmetics on Animals*-- and get ideas on the problem and other points mentioned in the Home Assignment worksheet. The completed worksheets should be sent to T via email before the next session, so that T can draw up the list of their suggestions for a company (about what should be done) and what they as consumers can do to contribute to the ending of this cruel practice. | To search for, extract and process relevant information on the Internet about a cosmetics company. | Home Assignment worksheet | T allows Ss time to prepare their ideas. This activity is a preparatory step (pre-writing) for the upcoming session dedicated to writing a letter of complaint about an ethical issue. So, break time of a few days between the 2nd and 3rd sessions is essential at this stage. |

**Session nº 3. Writing a formal letter of complaint to a cosmetics company**

| Phase | Time Interaction | Activities | Aims | Teaching resources | Anticipated problems/Possible solutions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Opening** | 10<br>T→C<br>GG | T displays the final writing task and reads it with the class. T puts Ss into groups of three to brainstorm the ideas why the company's behaviour is wrong. T hands out a mind-map with some notes to each S in the group and encourages the groups to add their own ideas, which are further discussed as a class. | To brainstorm ideas for their letters of complaint. | Final writing task<br>Mind-map | Ss may not be familiar with a mind-mapping strategy. T will explain the concept and show some examples. T may check Ss' understanding of the concept of mind mapping by asking volunteers to give some examples. |
| **Main** | 5<br>T→C | T displays on the Slide all the ideas (previously elaborated on by Ss in the Home Assignment worksheet) about what they as customers would do (e.g. sign an online petition and share it with their circle, etc.) if they detected that the company, whose beauty products they normally buy, tests them on animals. Ss vote to decide which ones would persuade them to take action. | To select the most relevant suggestions to be developed in the letter. | Slide with Ss' ideas drawn from their Home Assignment worksheets | T reminds that company managers are their intended audience, whereas urging the managers to reconsider their strategies is their main objective. |
| | 20<br>S,S,S | T has Ss start planning their letters using the paragraph plan, thinking of useful expressions that might help to connect ideas and choosing their best reasons /arguments to develop | To outline and write the first draft of the letter. | Paragraph plan | T controls the time to make sure that outlining does not last more than 10 minutes. T moves around the class |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | in their letters. When the paragraph plans are ready, Ss write their first draft. | | | monitoring Ss' work and providing support if needed. |
| | 10<br>S↔S | Ss swap their work with a partner and give feedback to each other/suggest improvements using the rubric they had elaborated in the first session.<br>Ss will edit their letters at home and prepare a final version to hand in to T for grading in the next session. | To peer-assess the draft using the elaborated rubric. | Rubric | T moves among the pairs, providing support if needed (with an eye on low ability Ss). As Ss are familiar with the rubric and already used it for assessment, no mess is anticipated. |
| **Closing** | 10<br>T→C | T brings the lesson to a conclusion by previewing learning for the upcoming session: creating and presenting an educational poster on formal letter writing. T hands out poster paper to each group of 5 and provides guidelines for poster design so that Ss can start negotiating the contents and agreeing on their contributions. T also encourages Ss to look at other examples of posters on the Internet, search for and select/cut relevant material for their own poster (and bring their cuttings to the next session). | To provide poster paper and clear guidelines for the poster design and assessment criteria. | Poster guidelines<br><br>Poster design rubric | Groupings for the poster design will be agreed among Ss before this session (in the initial session). So, no mess is anticipated here.<br>T encourages Ss to agree on who will be the spokesperson in each group during the presentation of their poster.<br>T provides Ss with a poster design rubric and asks Ss to read through the criteria in their groups before they start elaborating their poster. |

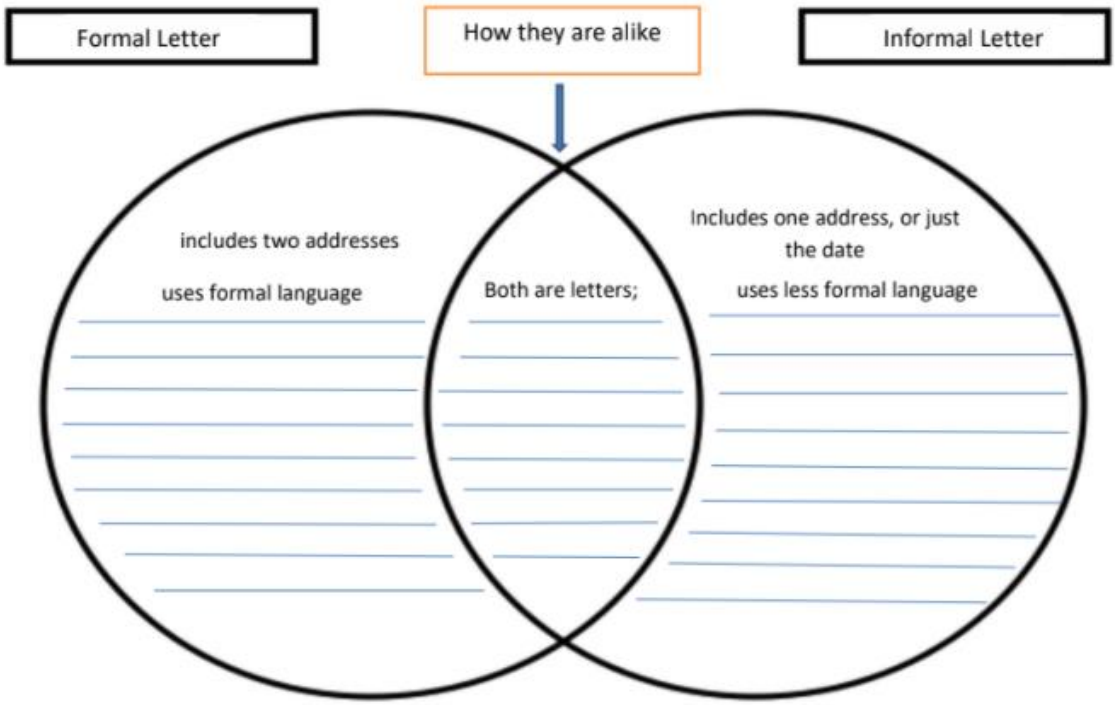
**Session nº 4. Take action: designing a poster**

| Phase | Time<br>Interaction | Activities | Aims | Teaching resources | Anticipated problems/Possible solutions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Opening** | 3<br>T→C | T starts the session by showing a video on the importance of teamwork. | To encourage Ss to work effectively in their groups. | Projector | |
| | 7<br>T→C | T explains to Ss the procedures for setting up their posters for peers to view and presenting them. Each group will stand next to their poster in a determined section of the classroom and the spokesperson will explain its organization (how to move through poster), and main points. Other students may ask questions after the presentation. Each student will use a Voter sheet to choose the most eye-catching and informative poster. | To provide instructions regarding the procedures for setting up and presenting their posters. | | Before the session, T will set up the space for each group to present their posters. |
| **Main** | 25<br>GG | Ss apply what they learnt in the previous sessions and design a poster, writing, drawing and using the material from the Internet. | To design a poster drawing and using the cuttings from the Internet. | poster paper<br>felt-tip pens<br>erasers<br>glue/scissors<br>printed materials from the Internet | T monitors and helps Ss' work, feeding in ideas and vocabulary as necessary. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 15<br>G→GG | Each group sets up their posters for their peers to view and the spokesperson of each group briefly describes its structure and how to move through the poster).<br>T circulates through the presentations and fills out her voter sheet (this must be in accordance with the poster design rubric).<br>Ss watch displays and keep notes in their voter sheets too. After they have had a chance to see all of the displays, they vote on the best poster (*Ss cannot vote on their own poster) in their sheets and hand them in to T. | To assess peers' work and vote on the most eye-catching and informative poster. | Poster Checklist<br>Voter sheet | T hands out a checklist to each group so that Ss can check whether they have included all the required information and polish their posters before the presentations. |
| **Closing** | 5<br>T→C | T calls for 1-2 volunteers to process the results. If there is no tie, T announces the winners and hands out a prize. In case of a tie after counting the votes, the second round of voting will be conducted by a show of hands, with winners selected by majority. | | | |

*APPENDIX II. Didactic material: Session 1*

Venn diagram




T-chart

| *Formal letter* | *Informal letter* |
|---|---|
| ✔ Includes two addresses and the date at the top | ✔ Does not include addresses or dates |
| **Greetings:**<br>Dear Mr /Mrs / Ms (+surname)<br>Dear Sir or Madam,<br>**Endings:**<br>Yours sincerely, (if you know their name)<br>Yours faithfully, (if you don't know their names)<br>Best wishes,<br>Best / kind regards, | **Greetings:**<br>Hi, / Hi there, / Dear...<br>**Endings**: Bye for now,<br>Write soon!<br>See you soon!<br>Call me!<br>Take care!<br>(Lots of / All my) love,<br>Hugs and kisses, |
| ✔ Type your full name;<br>✔ Signature in between closing and typed name; | ✔ One signature – first name;<br>✔ Can use nicknames; |
| ✔ Uses formal verbs and expressions;<br>✔ Uses modal verbs to make polite requests;<br>✔ Uses full forms (I am);<br>✔ Uses linkers to sequence ideas (Firstly, Secondly, Finally, etc.) | ✔ Uses chatty and colloquial language;<br>✔ Avoid linkers;<br>✔ Includes phrasal verbs and idioms;<br>✔ Uses short forms (I'm); |

Two samples of a formal letter of complaint

| Letter 1 | Letter 2 |
|---|---|
| 13 Akeman Way<br>Combe<br>CB56 8FT<br><br>17th August 2013<br><br>Budget Hostel<br>46 Bennet Street<br>New Town<br>NW9 6FT<br><br>Dear Sir or Madam,<br><br>I am writing to complain about my stay in the Budget Hostel on 13th – 15th August, and your misleading advertisement in July's Youth Travel Magazine.<br><br>The advertisement stated that there would be no more than six guests per room. However, there were ten beds in mine. Moreover, the disco next door played loud music all night. When I complained, the manager was extremely rude, and refused to return my money. I was appalled by my treatment, and I feel as though I have been swindled. I can assure you that other guests also shared my feelings.<br><br>Taking all the above facts into considerations, I feel I am entitled to a compensation of 100 euros, which is half of the sum I paid for the stay. I would be pleased if you could send me a refund before the end of September, otherwise I shall have no other choice but to take the matter further and to contact the court.<br><br>Please find enclosed my reservation details for your reference. I look forward to hearing from you in the very near future.<br><br>Yours faithfully,<br><br>*Mercedes Suarez*<br><br>Mercedes Suarez | Bella Vista Hotel<br>43 Qawra Coast Road, Qawra,<br>Isla de Malta<br>SPB 1908 Malta<br><br>Dear Sir,<br><br>I have just returned from a holiday in Malta, staying at the Bella Vista Hotel, and I am writing to complain about number of points.<br><br>First of all I don't understand why you have changed my travel arrangements. You switched my flight, that changed my whole day plans, and finally I lost whole day waiting for my plane at the airport. Another thing is when I got to the airport in Italy your representative didn't turned up, and I had to take a taxi to the hotel. Also when I wanted to contact with her, she avoided me, I couldn't get from her any information.<br><br>The city was beautiful, tremendous beaches and views, nice and friendly people – that are the only good things that I can say about my holiday. The hotel and hotel service where I stayed was horrible. You have promised standard room with a sea view – that wasn't true. The Bella Vista Hotel was in poor condition. Lift was broke down almost every day and I had to climb on the sixth floor what was very annoying.<br><br>And food!!! The quality of food was very unsatisfactory. I must express my concern about the fact that the variety of food offered by the restaurant was very low. Also there was no proper vegetarian food at all.<br><br>Last thing I want complain about is available watersports. It was very expensive, too much like for me. You should have prepared some special offer for your customers.<br><br>I recommend you changing thing that I complained about. You should try to improve the comfort of the hotel and the quality of food in the restaurant.<br><br>I will be content with an apology and I hope you will consider my suggestions positively.<br><br>Yours sincerely<br>Michael |

Compare/contrast graphic organiser

**Compare/contrast graphic organizer**

Formal Letter of Complaint 1

Formal letter of Complaint 2

**How do these letters compare/contrast?**

**With regards to:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **The address of the writer**<br>*Where is it displayed?*<br>*(In the top right-hand corner, on the left?)* | |
| | **Date** | |
| | **The name and the address of the company or person you are writing to** | |
| | **Your greeting** | |
| | **Tone/Formality**<br>○ *formal words and expressions;*<br>○ *indirect structures;*<br>○ *full forms;*<br>○ *linkers to add and sequence ideas.* | |
| | **Body:**<br>○ *reason for writing;*<br>○ *the writer's complaint;*<br>○ *what the writer is going to do;*<br>○ *what the writer hopes the company will do;* | |
| | **Closing**<br>*Does it use an appropriate closing to match the greeting?* | |
| | **Signature** | |

Blank rubric

| This formal letter of complaint has the following: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Needs improvement 1 | Satisfactory 2 | Very good 3 | Excellent 4 |
| **Format** | | | | |
| Includes two addresses and the date | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Content (body)** | | | | |
| Clearly stated purpose (the writer states what s/he is complaining about) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Language/Audience** | | | | |
| Uses formal verbs instead of phrasal verbs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Uses linkers to sequence the ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Accuracy** | | | | |
| No spelling errors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Sample letter to be assessed using the elaborated rubric (as homework)

Jason Bourne

1234 Franklin Ave

San Diego Ca 92109

John Adult

CEO, Roundtable Pizza

46 Bennet Street

New Town

NW9 6FT

Dear Mr. John

I recently visited roundtable pizza with my family. I am sorry to say that I am extremely disappointed with the service we received.

Upon our arrival, the line was long and the cashier seemed kinda annoyed. He kept looking at his cell phone Instead of taking our order, which was extremely unprofessional.

We ordered one large peperoni pizza. Our order was correct, but the pizza arrived underdone. When my father asked the waitress to replace our order, she stated that we would need to wait 30 minutes if we wanted a new pizza. We decided to leave the establishment and eat at another pizza joint instead.

I would like you to address the issues of cell phone use and order replacement with your staff. Let them know that it's not cool to treat customers that way.

Sincerely,

Jason Bourne

*APPENDIX III. Didactic material: Session 2*

Advertisement

# You mean a woman can open it?

***Easily* — without a knife blade, a bottle opener, or even a husband!**

All it takes is a dainty grasp, an easy, two-finger twist — and the catsup is ready to pour. We call this safe-sealing bottle cap the Alcoa HyTop. Made of pure, food-loving Alcoa Aluminum, it spins off — and back on again — without muscle power because an exclusive Alcoa process tailors it to each bottle's threads, vacuum sealing both top and sides.

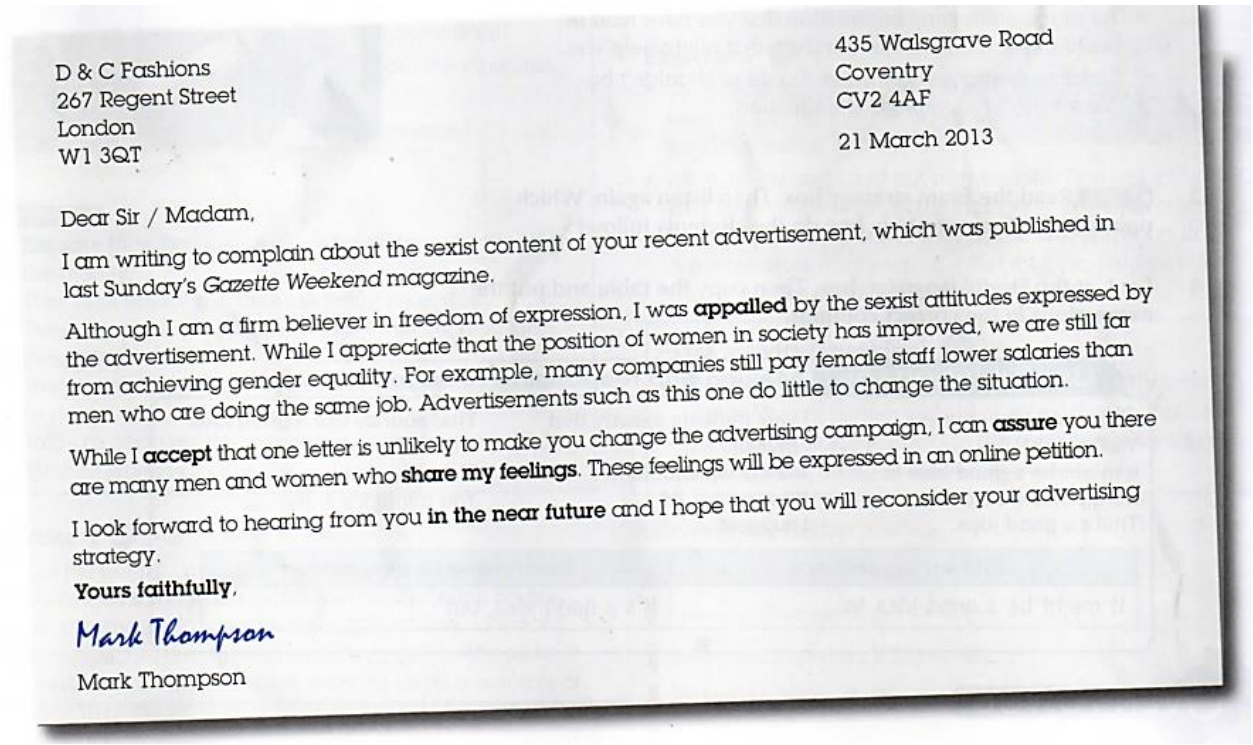
You'll recognize the attractive, tractable HyTop when you see it on your grocer's shelf. It's long, it's white, it's grooved — and it's on the most famous and flavorful brands.

Put the bottle that wears it in your basket ... save fumbling, fuming and fingers at opening time with the most cooperative cap in the world — the Alcoa HyTop Closure.

Alcoa Aluminum

ALUMINUM COMPANY OF AMERICA • PITTSBURGH 19, PA.

Model of the letter of complaint about an ethical issue



D & C Fashions
267 Regent Street
London
W1 3QT

435 Walsgrave Road
Coventry
CV2 4AF

21 March 2013

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to complain about the sexist content of your recent advertisement, which was published in last Sunday's *Gazette Weekend* magazine.

Although I am a firm believer in freedom of expression, I was **appalled** by the sexist attitudes expressed by the advertisement. While I appreciate that the position of women in society has improved, we are still far from achieving gender equality. For example, many companies still pay female staff lower salaries than men who are doing the same job. Advertisements such as this one do little to change the situation.

While I **accept** that one letter is unlikely to make you change the advertising campaign, I can **assure** you there are many men and women who **share my feelings**. These feelings will be expressed in an online petition.

I look forward to hearing from you **in the near future** and I hope that you will reconsider your advertising strategy.

**Yours faithfully**,

Mark Thompson

Mark Thompson

(Source: Dignen, S. (2013). *Over To You. Batxillerat 2*. Oxford University Press.)

Informal vs. Formal matching

**Instructions:** Match the expressions 1-6 with the formal expressions A-F. In what kind of letter would you use the expressions A-F?

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. I'd like to apply for a job as a... | B. Please find enclosed the copy of my CV. |
| 2. I's sorry, but you're fired. | E. I am writing to make a reservation. |
| 3. Please send me information about the course. | F. I am afraid to inform you that we will not be renewing your contract. |
| 4. My CV is in this envelope. | D. I am writing in response to your advertisement for the post of... |
| 5. I want a room in your hotel. | A. I would be grateful if you could send me the details of the course. |
| 6. Have you got any...? | C. I am writing to enquire about the availability of... |

Linkers & their functions

# Matching Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Match the set of linkers we can use in formal letters on the left side to their function on the right side.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. As, since... | ● | ● A. Addition |
| 2. Also, Moreover, too, what's more... | ● | ● B. Concluding |
| 3. In order to, so that... | ● | ● C. Purpose |
| 4. Consequently, for this reason, therefore, so... | ● | ● D. Opinions |
| 5. Although, in spite of, on the one hand, yet... | ● | ● E. Cause |
| 6. After that, first of all, as soon as, in the end... | ● | ● F. Time and sequence |
| 7. I strongly believe, in my view, it seems clear to me that... | ● | ● G. Result |
| | | ● H. Agreeing and disagreeing |
| 8. I am strongly opposed to, I support this idea... | ● | ● I. Contrast |
| 9. All in all, to conclude, to sum up... | ● | |

(Matching worksheet created with MyWorksheetMaker.com)

Home Assignment worksheet

| |
|---|
| In the following session, you will be writing a letter to a cosmetics company to complain about an ethical issue, namely, the fact that the company tests its products on animals.<br>Your pre-writing task is **to answer the questions below**. |

What is the name of the cosmetics company that you will be writing to?

| |
|---|
| |

To whom will this letter be addressed? Identify the person who you will be writing to. You may need to research on the Internet. **Write the name of the recipient below.** (If you are unable to locate a specific person, your letter will be addressed Dear Sir or Madam,).

| |
|---|
| |

Find the mailing address of the cosmetics company that you will be writing to. **Write it below**.

| |
|---|
| |

**Write your school address below (this will be your address)**.

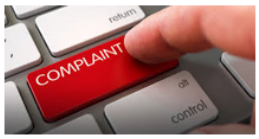
| |
|---|
| |

Write 3-4 ideas about what you as a customer could do if you detected that the company, whose products you buy on a regular basis, carries out tests on animals. For example,

- sign an online petition and share it with your circle;
- --
- --
- --

*APPENDIX IV. Didactic material: Session 3*

Final writing task



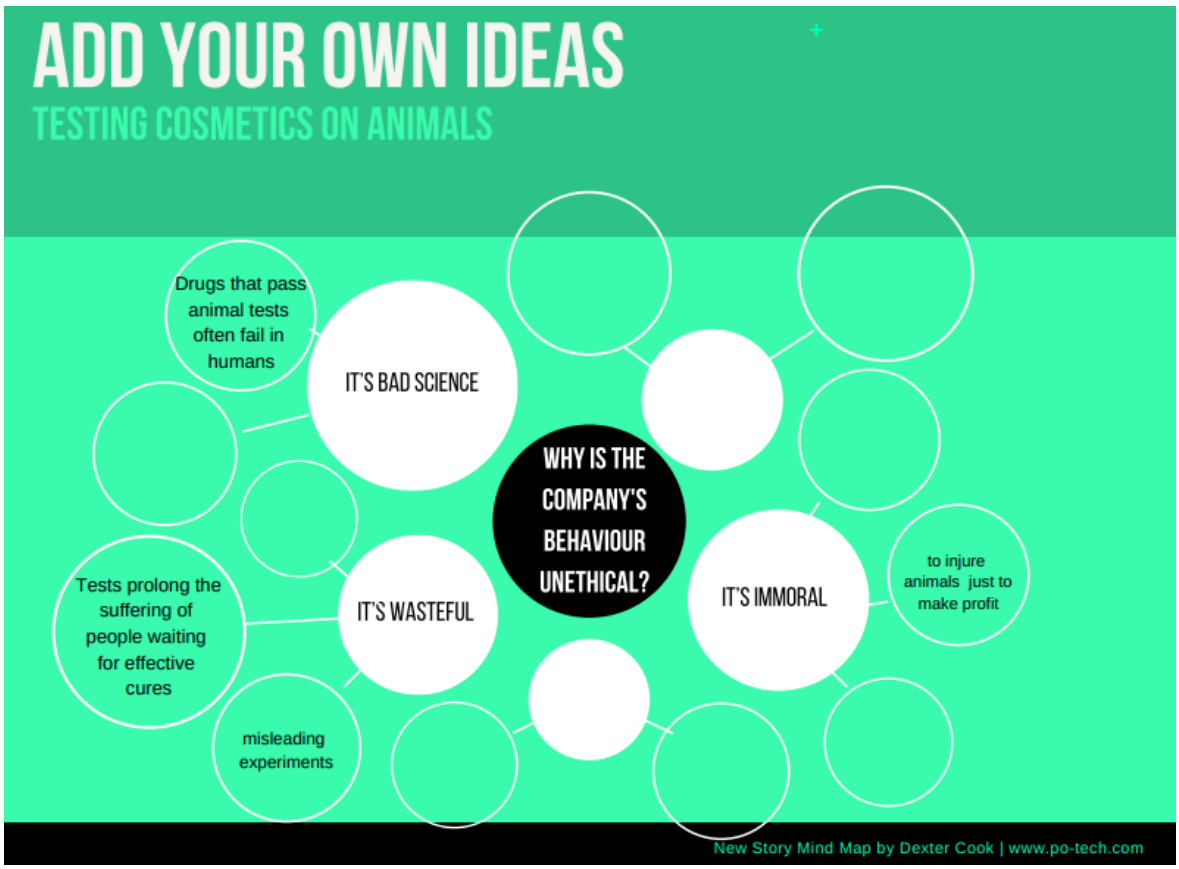

Company managers
**our intended audience**

urging the managers to change their behaviour
**our objective**

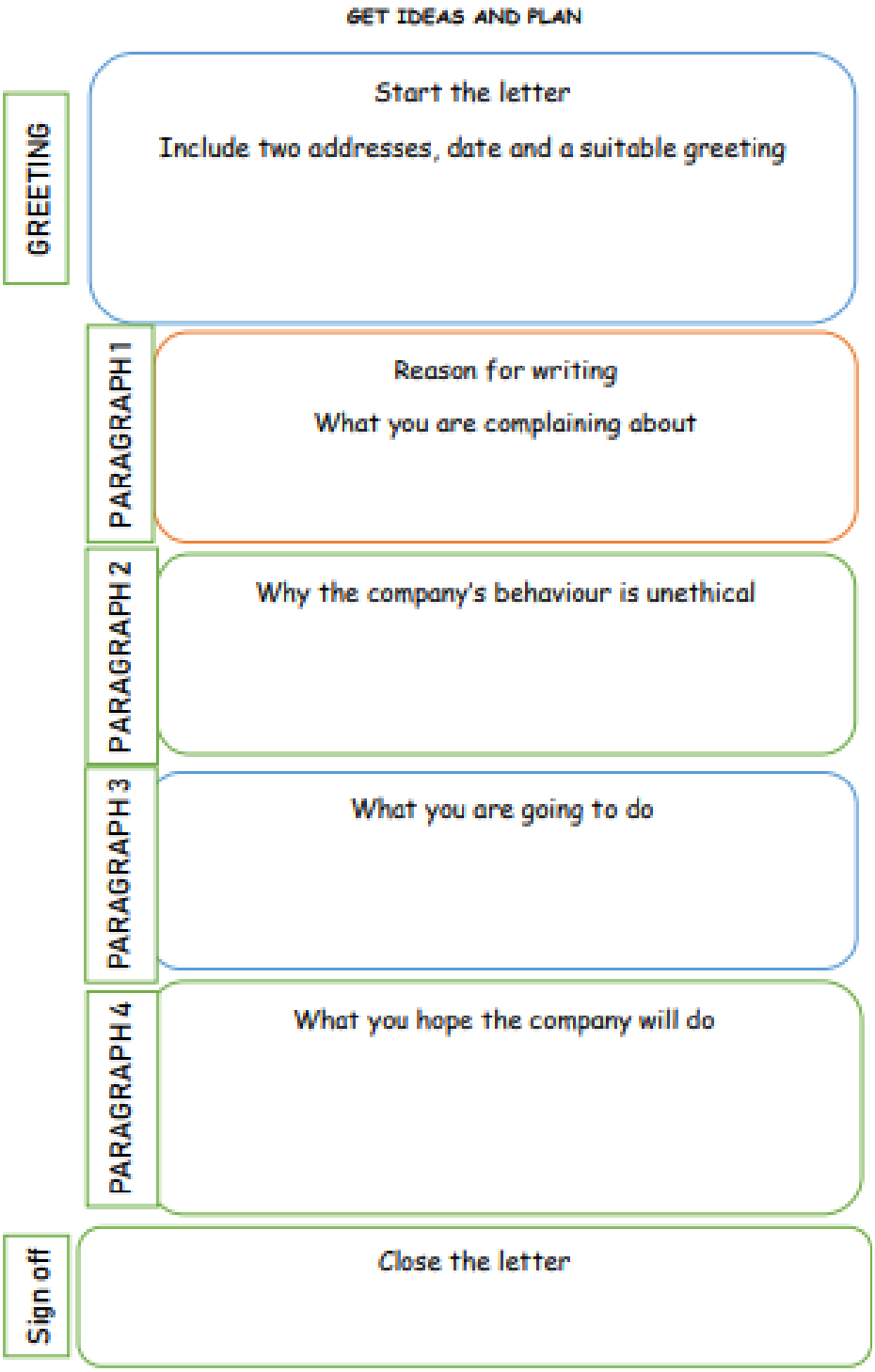
*FINAL TASK*

You have found out that a well-known cosmetics company tests its products (creams, shampoos, shower gels that you buy from this company on a regular basis) on animals. You strongly believe that it is immoral to injure living creatures just to make a profit. You want **to write a letter** to this company to complain about this issue, giving your reasons why the company's behaviour is unethical and trying to persuade the managers to reconsider their strategies and change their behaviour.

Mind-map



Paragraph plan



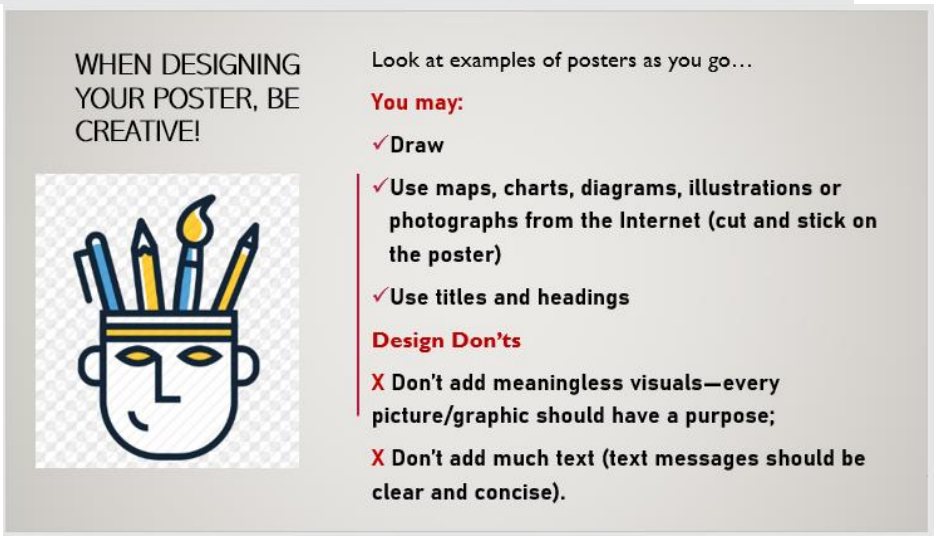
Rubric

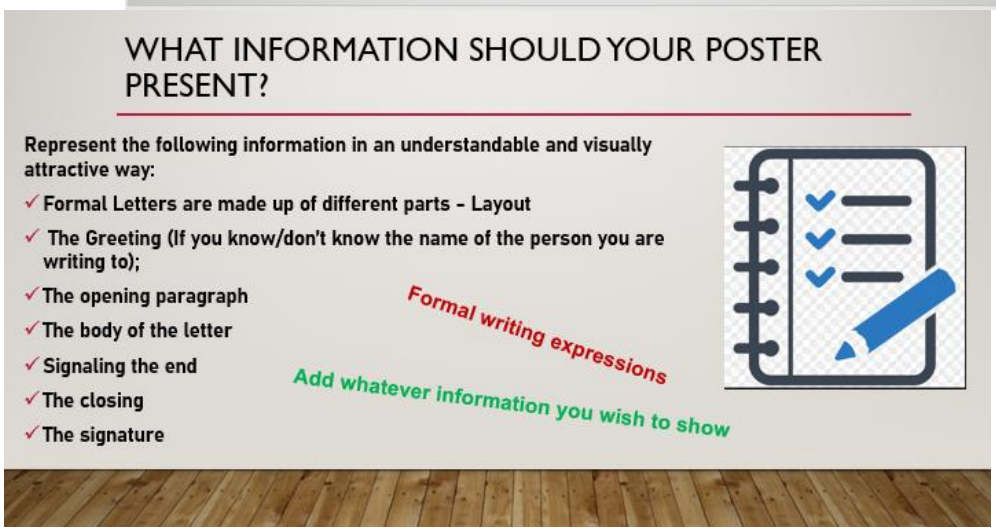
***I have assessed the draft of my peer:*** _____

***(write name and surname)***

| This formal letter of complaint has the following: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Needs improvement 1 | Satisfactory 2 | Very good 3 | Excellent 4 |
| **Format** | | | | |
| Includes two addresses and the date | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Uses a formal greeting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Uses an appropriate closing to match the greeting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| There is a signature and typed name and surname under the signature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Content (body)** | | | | |
| the writer states what s/he is complaining about | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| the writer states why s/he believes the company behaviour is unethical, giving reasons; | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| the writer states what s/he is going to do; | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| the writer states what s/he expects from the company | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Language/Audience** | | | | |
| Uses formal verbs and word expressions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Uses linkers to sequence the ideas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Uses full forms | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Uses adjectives with negative prefixes | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| **Accuracy** | | | | |
| No spelling errors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| No punctuation errors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| No grammar errors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Poster guidelines

Poster design rubric

| Category | Needs improvement 1 | Satisfactory 2 | Good 3 | Excellent 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Coverage of the Topic | Details on the poster have little or nothing to do with main topic. | Details on the poster relate to the topic but are too general or incomplete. The audience needs more information to understand. | Details on the poster include important information but the audience may need more information to understand fully. | Details on the poster capture the important information about the topic and increase the audience's understanding. |
| Use of Visuals Graphics/Pictures /Drawings | Visuals do not relate to the topic. | Most visuals relate to the topic. | All visuals relate to the topic and most facilitate its understanding. | All visuals relate to the topic and all contribute to its understanding. They are colourful, attractive and stimulate interest. |
| Organization and design | Information is disorganized and unclear/ too small. | Most of the information is organized and easily viewed from 50 cm away. Some headings and subheadings may be missing and/or do not help the audience understand. | Information is organized according to the headings and subheadings and easily viewed from 1 m away. However, some headings and/or subheadings are not clear enough and hinder the audience's understanding. | Information is organized according to clear headings and subheadings, which facilitates the audience's understanding, and is easily viewed from 1,5 m away. |
| Accuracy | Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. | A few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. | Minimum grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. | No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. |

*APPENDIX V. Didactic material: Session 4*

Poster design checklist

**Our poster includes the following information:**

- ✓ Formal Letter Layout (two addresses, date, greeting, opening, body, closing and signature)
- ✓ The Greeting:
  - If you know the name of the person you are writing to;
  - If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to;
- ✓ The opening paragraph: a clear statement of your reason for writing;
- ✓ The body of the letter: 4 or more paragraphs with relevant information;
- ✓ Signalling the end: the final sentence/paragraph which indicates that the letter is going to finish;
- ✓ The closing:
  - If you know the name of the person you are writing to;
  - If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to;
- ✓ The signature: your name under your signature;
- ✓ Formal language: indirect structures, formal verbs and expressions, linkers to sequence ideas.